



*Drawn from Nature and on Stone by Wetzehouse Hamburg.*

DRONIAUS NOVORHOENIANDI, F.

*Hellmuth & Hildebrandt.*

# DROMAIUS NOVÆ-HOLLANDIÆ.

## The Emu.

- New Holland Cassowary*, Phill. Bot. Bay, pl. in p. 271.—White's Journ., pl. in p. 129.—Lath. Gen. Syn. Supp., vol. ii. p. 290.—Ib. Gen. Hist., vol. viii. p. 383.
- Southern Cassowary*, Shaw, Nat. Misc., pl. 99.
- Emu of New South Wales*, Collin's Voy., vol. ii. pl. in p. 307.
- Casuarius Novæ-Hollandiæ*, Lath. Ind. Orn., vol. ii. p. 665.—Cuv. Règn. Anim., tom. i. p. 497.
- Casoare de la Nouvelle Hollande*, Péron, Voy. aux Terr. Aust., tom. i. p. 467. pls. 36 and 41.
- Dromaius ater*, Vieill. Gal. des Ois., tom. ii. pl. 226.—Less. Traité d'Orn., p. 9. Atlas, pl. 2. fig. 2.
- The Emu*, Gard. and Menag. of Zool. Soc., Birds, p. 192.
- Van Diemen's Land Cassowary*, Lath. Gen. Hist., vol. viii. p. 384. pl. cxxxviii.
- Dromiceus Australis*, Swains. Class. of Birds, vol. ii. p. 346.
- *Emu*, Steph. Cont. of Shaw's Gen. Zool., vol. xi. p. 439, and vol. xiv. p. 307. pl. 39.
- Dromaius Novæ-Hollandiæ*, G. R. Gray, List of Gen. of Birds, 2nd Edit., p. 82.—List of Birds in Brit. Mus. Coll., part iii. p. 54.

---

THIS fine bird, which is only exceeded in size by the Ostrich of Africa, was first described and figured under the name of the New Holland Cassowary in Governor Phillip's "Voyage to Botany Bay," published in 1789, and it has been included in all ornithological works of a general nature that have appeared since that date; but by far the most accurate figure and account of it that has yet been given are those published by the late Mr. Bennett in the "Gardens and Menagerie of the Zoological Society delineated." "In size and bulk," says Mr. Bennett, "the Emu is exceeded by the African Ostrich alone. Its average measurement may be estimated at between five and six feet in height. In form it closely resembles the Ostrich, but is lower on the legs, shorter in the neck, and of a more thick-set and clumsy make. At a distance its feathers have more the appearance of hair than of plumage, their barbs being all loose and separate. As in the Ostriches they take their origin by pairs from the same shaft. . . . The wings are so extremely small as to be quite invisible when applied to the surface of the body. They are clothed with feathers exactly similar to those of the back, which divide from a middle line and fall gracefully over on either side. . . . These birds appear to be widely spread over the southern part of the continent of New Holland and the neighbouring islands; but we are not aware that they have been hitherto observed in its tropical regions. They were formerly very abundant at Botany Bay and Port Jackson. On the south coast they have been met with in great numbers, at Port Phillip by Captain Flinders, and at King George's Sound by the same officer and the naturalists of the expedition under D'Entrecasteaux. They seem also to be extremely numerous in the adjacent islands, especially in Kangaroo and King's Islands, where they were found in the greatest abundance by both Flinders and Péron. According to the latest accounts from Swan River, they have also been observed on that part of the west coast on which the settlement is situated."

The researches that have been made in Australia since the above account was published prove that it is universally dispersed over the whole of the Australian continent, and that it is even more numerous in the northern or tropical regions than it would seem to have formerly been in the southern; on the other hand, from Van Diemen's Land, the islands in Bass's Straits and the colony of New South Wales it is almost extirpated; a few still range over the western part of Van Diemen's Land, and it may yet be met with on the Liverpool Plains, in New South Wales, and probably on some of the low islands at the mouth of the Hunter, where I observed its recent foot-marks. In South Australia it has suffered less from the encroachments of the white man than in New South Wales, and the same may be said of the colony of Swan River.

"In its manners," says Mr. Bennett, "the Emu bears a close resemblance to the Ostrich. . . . Its food appears to be wholly vegetable, consisting chiefly of fruits, roots and herbage; and it is consequently, notwithstanding its great strength, perfectly inoffensive. The length of its legs and the muscularity of its thighs enable it to run with great swiftness; and as it is exceedingly shy, it is not easily overtaken or brought within gun-shot. Captain Currie states that it affords excellent coursing, equalling, if not surpassing, the same sport with the hare in England; but Mr. Cunningham says that dogs will seldom attack it, both on account of some peculiar odour in its flesh which they dislike, and because the injuries it inflicts upon them by striking out with its feet are frequently very severe. The settlers even assert that the Emu will break the small bone of a man's leg by this sort of kick; which to avoid, the well-trained dogs run up abreast and make a sudden spring at their neck, whereby they are quickly despatched."

Its flesh has been compared to coarse beef, which it resembles, according to Mr. Cunningham, "both in appearance and taste, and is good and sweet eating; nothing indeed can be more delicate than the flesh of the young ones. There is but little fit for culinary use upon any part of the Emu, except the hind-quarters, which are of such dimensions that the shouldering of two hind-legs homewards for a mile distance once proved to me as tiresome a task as I ever recollect to have encountered in the colony." I may remark that its flesh proved of the greatest service to Dr. Leichhardt and his intrepid companions during their overland

route from Moreton Bay to Port Essington, in the course of which, but more particularly between the head of the Gulf of Carpentaria and Port Essington, the sight and capture of the Emu was almost a daily occurrence; so abundant in fact was it, that he states that he saw in the short space of eight miles at least a hundred, in flocks of three, five, ten, and even more, at a time. Dr. Leichhardt mentions that the natives on killing an Emu invariably break the wings—why, he was at a loss to conceive, as they could but slightly assist the animal in making its escape, should it survive; some curious practices also exist with respect to this bird among the natives, the particulars of which I have not been able to learn, but I may mention that the young men and boys are not allowed to feed upon it.

The only vocal sound the Emu has been heard to utter is a low booming or pumping noise, which we know is produced in the female by means of the expansion and contraction of a large membranous bag, surrounding an oblong opening through the rings of the trachea; but whether this peculiarity of structure is also to be found in the male I am not aware. For the loan of some interesting drawings and a specimen in spirits of this very singular conformation I am indebted to my friend W. Yarrell, Esq.

The eggs are six or seven in number, of a beautiful dark green, resembling shagreen in appearance; five inches and three-quarters in length by three inches and three-quarters in breadth; they are held in much esteem by the natives, who feed upon them exclusively whenever they can be procured. They are merely placed in a cavity scooped in the earth, generally in a sandy soil.

They pair with tolerable constancy, and the male bird appears to take a large share in the task of incubation. In captivity they speedily become tame and domesticated, and have been bred without difficulty in various collections in this country.

Little or no difference of colour is observable in the sexes, which may be thus described:—

The entire plumage is of a dull brown, mottled, particularly on the under surface, with dirty grey; the feathers of the head and neck becoming gradually shorter, and so thinly placed that the purplish hue of the skin of the throat and round the ears is perfectly visible; irides brown; bill and legs dusky black.

The young on first quitting the shell have a very elegant appearance, the ground-colour being greyish white, with two longitudinal broad black stripes along the back, and two others on each side, each subdivided by a narrow middle line of white; these stripes being continued along the neck without subdivision and broken into irregular spots on the head; two other broken stripes pass down the fore-part of the neck and breast, and terminate in a broad band across the thighs.

The Plate represents a reduced figure of the adult and a brood of young ones.